Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

AVARICIOUS OF DUTY

One hears of many people in this world who profess themselves weary of the eternal iteration and reduplication of things. They say they are sometimes almost sickened at the unvarying prospect of eating three meals at the same intervals every day and electing one president inalterably every four years. Politics turns in cycles and religion moves by the same fits and the same starts which history has already shown. They can't even achieve novelty by proclaiming lack of novelty, for the Preacher did that while the world was still comparatively new.

To one thus irked and harassed by this revolving mimeograph of creation, there is still one resource, perhaps by him yet unobserved. In the world of modern education, if he turns to it, he will find that variety and ceaseless novelty which he has looked for in vain elsewhere. For that is one place where they never cease either to think of or to do some new thing. To look closely at the spectacle is to be dizzied, bewildered. To look away from it awhile is to be startled and puzzled by changes on renewing one's gaze. Theory follows upon theory, experiment upon experiment, until the alive and alert educator hardly dares to sleep, lest he be passed in the night.

The wearied one will be awed into interest by the mere comprehensiveness of the educational structure, and most of all by the keenness to discover duties, the wit to recognize them as its own, and the all-accepting readiness to lift them and away with them, to be found in the active educational body. No sooner does a need or even a desideratum of youth appear or draw new attention to itself in any way, than ardent and omnivorous educators clap it into the public schools, and with it new duties for teachers.

Nothing is too hard or too comprehensive for the pedagogic conscience. Other once-recognized forces are rapidly being stripped bare of duties and functions. One stands amazed at such dauntless and avaricious conscientiousness. The most of us are likely, when we see needs or duties lying about us, to say public-spiritedly, "Somebody ought to do that." But the

aroused educator says instead, "*I* ought to do that," and straightway hastens to the attempt. Nor does he even stop at willingness to take complete charge of the mental and physical and moral and social development of the child, but goes on into what might be regarded as intimate and private relations, and lays hands on his very soul. For the final business of every teacher, we learn from many eager essays in educational journals and many sententious lectures, is the development of personality — individuality. "Don't teach the subject, teach the child," is the beginning of their cry. "Anybody can learn a subject — anybody can teach a subject. But real pedagogy teaches the child — and develops his personality." One wonders, a little agape, how they *dare*. Could you venture, with an ordinary conscience, to tell even an eight-year-old that you were going to develop his personality? Might he not seek you out in later years and tell you that he intended to have a gentleman's satisfaction from you? And what if, in addition to that, he discovered that you were keeping a day-book of him, a double-entry record of his personal affairs and your suspicions and deductions regarding them and his personality, with the intention of passing it on to the next teacher, still a stranger to him, and eventually to a Superintendent of Research and Efficiency? What are the rights of personality in a case like that?

But the pedagogic conscience dareth all things. If a new human function, entirely private and domestic, were discovered to-morrow, by the next day some duty regarding it would be laid upon the teachers of the public schools. One might suppose that we were a parentless race, from the combined devotion and avidity with which the school seizes upon function after function of parenthood. "The home no longer functions," says one, "in relating the individual unit to the great social entity." It will not be the fault of the school if it continues to function in any degree. Talk of feminism! There will soon be no other possibility open to a mother but desuetude or feministic pursuits. After the public school has taught her children to brush their teeth and admire nature and love their country and speak the truth and raise their hats and use soap and eat with a fork, and has examined their tonsils and their eyes and discovered their

adenoids, and has given them credit in school units for being kind to their parents and little brothers and getting up to breakfast and hanging up their hats and for every other slightest evidence of a rudimentary sense of duty shown at home; after they have been led to some library hall to hear a professional story-teller tell professionally the very stories that mothers used to tell with divine amateurishness; after they have been haled off to a public playground where some briefly trained specialist will herd them together with the unassorted children of the neighborhood and *teach* them to *play* (the italics are my own);—after all this, what is there for the lonely and idle mother to do but to read to her children the ready-made bed-time story which a hundred thousand other mothers are reading to their children, and go out into the world, a feminist-errant? One almost suspects the Creator must have been an amateur Himself instead of a professional, or He would not have made the mistake of giving children to parents, instead of handing them over at once to a school of education.

This steady and ingenious increase in the variety and complexity of the curriculum is not the only addition to the teacher's duties. Constantly—if practice corresponds to the theories before us always—the teacher is made more completely responsible for the whole result of education. All the geniality and sweet-mindedness and balminess that has gone into education lately, is for the pupil, not for the teacher. The whole study seems to be to ease the burden of the pupil—only a normal human burden after all—and let him walk lightly along a roseate path of inclination. We hear of happy schools where the word "Don't" is never uttered. Require nothing of the child, everything of the teacher, is the cry. Nothing is too hard for the teacher; but ask of the pupil only that he remain his simple, natural self. Let the teacher, though, at any expense of effort, turn this naturalness somehow or other into an instructed and developed result. One can't help wondering where the next generation of teachers is to come from. Will one who has been Montessoried effortlessly into perfection and maturity have the patience and will and self-sternness to lead anyone else into the same path?

One can't help being gloomily unexpectant of a generation that has never buckled down, using its own will consciously in the buckling, to learn the multiplication-table. The multiplication-table was a force for righteousness. More things were wrought by it than this world dreamed of. One must commiserate the child who has never sat down to "commit" the seven-times with a satisfying effort of will and glory in the result. He has missed a moral gratification which he has a right to. But nowadays, we are to understand, committing of any sort is regarded as a very low form of learning, not an educative process at all, in fact. Educational psychology seems to be a good deal like a ouiji-board; it appears to be saying this or that, but how can you tell that you have not given it a shove?

If there is any one department in which there ought to be a new distribution of responsibility, it is in the issues of instruction in English. English work has been yearly Sebastianized by the arrows of adverse criticism. No other teaching has its results so open to censure or so likely to receive it. Everyone is qualified to judge them. Who is going to discover, anyway, whether a pupil has the accepted pronounciation of Latin — or any at all, for that matter? Or which of the odds and ends about science he should have learned in his nature-study? But every time he opens his mouth in speech or puts pen to paper he shows what he has not learned about English; and he is never, so long as he lives, safe from the possibility of having to confess that he has not read *Silas Marner* or *Travels with a Donkey.* The results of the teaching of English are as obvious, and supposedly as permanent, as a man's features, and are as open to the criticism of the passer-by.

It is true, and the dutiful teacher is himself the first to recognize it, that pupils do not all leave school, nor students college, perfect and fluent in speech and writing, and possessed of discriminating taste in literature and an eager appetite for good books. He must even go further and acknowledge bitterly that only an almost indiscoverable percentage has attained that consummation as the result of his tuition, and that from that summit there is a rapid gradation downward to the broad well-satisfied plain of "seems like"and Harold Bell Wright. It does

appear to him, as his ear is smitten daily with the speech of his fellow-men, all of whom have been in public school, many of them in high school, some even through college, that the precept and labor of himself and his fellow-workmen have been in vain.

Especially is he stung with a sense of failure when he views the chosen reading, or choice of no reading, of the very ones whom he sometime introduced to certain riches of literature. It is hard to realize, as one observes popular adult taste in books and magazines, that at this very moment the youth of our land, those at least who are in process of being educated, are at this formative period having exhibited to them, faithfully and earnestly, with every resource of knowledge and sympathy and originality and vivacity and energy the teacher has at command, the beauties and satisfactoriness of good books. The contrast between this narrow stream of good reading running through our common life, and the great bookless or ill-booked plain which encloses it, seems almost like a fabulous thing. The tremendous circulation of the yearly quota of causeless books—publishers now astound us in terms of millions—seems to jeer at the faithful prophet of the prescribed classics and say, "Where are your Shakespeares and Stevensons aud Thackerays now? Do what you can with your student while you have him; we'll get him as soon as you're through." And the teacher looks out upon the world and acknowledges that it is true, meekly and with self-reproof that he has not done his work better.

It is obviously his fault. Here is another place where the teacher should function for the whole world. So he redoubles his efforts, and looks about for a new method of making the forces of literature function in relation to the pupil. One rarely finds established methods of teaching literature; for this objective dissatisfaction with result bids the teacher be always up and seeking a new way. Year by year he leads the experimental life professionally, trying always for a means to establish a permanent relation between the books read and the pupil who reads them. He wanders from fact to interpretation and back; he mingles the emotional and the historical and gives no fixed preference to either. The inspirational method beckons him with its chance of individuality and originality, and he spends hours stroking and

twisting and man-handing beautiful lines, purring over them gently and ever anon breathing out, "Isn't it beautiful?" while sentimental pupils beam responsively upon him and he seems to be doing a lovely thing. Then one day he catches the humorous eye of a student in the back row, and is driven abruptly to announce an examination, the result of which is depressing to him. He goes back to the safe prosaic method of inquiry into fact and etymology, and analysis of figures, and looking up allusions, and identification of the homespun virtues of literature; and later he finds the very pupils so treated joining in the parrot cluck of the trite-minded, "Oh, I had to read *A Tale of Two Cities* in school, so of course I've never read any Dickens since." He decides to lecture on the content of the books read, thus developing the students' critical judgment and broadening their knowledge of thought, while at the same time he trusts them to do the work; his resulting popularity is gratifying to him, until he learns that his course is labeled "grapes" and that all the lightest students in school are flocking to his classes. And at any time, if he inquires into the outside reading of his classes — an imprudent and disheartening thing to do — or if he meets any body of them in post-school days, he is made aware that the reading they are doing of free choice is in most cases unaffected by any memory of the reading they were required to do. Or if he at any time falls into discussion of the matter with one outside his profession, he is likely to be told, plainly and for his own good, that his teaching of literature is impractical and ineffectual. And he is easily convinced that it is.

Perhaps the teacher is to blame. If public education is responsible for adenoids and honesty, for patriotism and daily baths, it should be willing to assume as a matter of course such a small concern as life-long taste in reading and permanent choice of thought-material. It surely is his fault if the pupils rebound like rubber balls from the surface of English literature, at which he has tossed them. The ideal which has constantly stimulated him to further endeavor, is to cause the student who has read one novel of Thackeray under compulsion, to read another at home, of his own free will — and then another. Every teacher dreams dreams. They are realized sometimes, but not

often enough to develop any smugness or vanity in him. And the public reminds him of his failure.

But after all, what if the teacher should turn around and demand a division of responsibility? Perhaps the home no longer functions in teaching its youth to read — but why shouldn't it? Is it an unaskable question?

When an instructor sits in front of a new class in literature and tries to form an estimate of what is before him, even former experience does not preclude a sense of bewilderment, as he contemplates not only the variety of mind — that goes without saying — but all the variety of taste and degree of knowledge and emotional experience and practical information which the different homes and lives of the students have furnished them. Your equipment for a new course in mathematics is your mental powers, by whatever name you call them; your preparation for reading a book is all that you have ever seen and done and thought and read. In a class of thirty there is present all that thirty different homes and experiences have supplied.

And in most cases the homes have supplied very little, in either taste or intellectual experience. For perhaps half — one hesitates to venture upon proportions — of any class, the literature read is entirely detached from anything else upon which their minds work. And this is not the fault of the literature chosen. In every high school — even in every college — a very large number of students come from practically bookless homes. Reading, except for a rather aimless dipping into newspapers, has no part in the life or occupation of the household — not necessarily one of poverty either. There is not even an expectation or illusion regarding it. The reading assigned to pupils from these households is an exotic sort of task, to which neither inclination nor custom nor example leads them.

From this grade they range on up, through those whose homes contain a certificate of respectability in the form of a bookcase with an impossible chaotic collection of rarely opened volumes, accidentally acquired; those from homes of assumed literary tastes, abounding in current magazines and new novels in sectional bookcases, and proud up-to-date readers; up at last to the comparatively few whose taste has been developed and to some de-

gree established by careful home fostering and direction. And a teacher takes a medley like this and turns it all in upon the same field of literature. Being bound in the bands of the College Entrance Requirements, if he is in a high school, he gives them all, regardless of taste or knowledge or previous reading, *Silas Marner*, for example. Jocund or serious, ignorant or informed, they must all read it. One group, readers by taste and home encouragement, with quick visual and sympathetic imagination, and with some knowledge of English life already in hand, take it easily, pleasurably. At the other end of the class is a much larger group, home-starved, unread and uncurious, who know as much of details of English life as they do of the lost books of Tacitus. One boy connects the story with fifty things he has read before; the other connects it with nothing. And out of this conglomerate the teacher is expected — since he alone functions — to develop a finer popular taste.

Moreover, this wide diversity does not depend organically upon any social or financial gradation in the homes represented. No Bradstreet or list of patronesses or society column will give you more than an inkling of what you may expect from your pupils. No matter what social grade the teacher deals with, he begins on a very uneven and unassured foundation for his teaching of literature. Not only the preparation but the attitude is often against him. The fact is, the high school pupil is asked to do, often, what he sees no one else doing. In all his acquaintance of adults — and he knows he is only preparing to be an adult like them — he sees no one reading what he knows as classics. He never, outside of class, hears them praised, or even talked about in any natural way. No one but English teachers is supposed to be interested in them; he even skeptically suspects that their interest is an enforced professional one. He supposes his family to be intelligent enough for any purpose; but when he goes home from his recitation in English, he finds his mother who is "a great reader," giving a few serious hours to Hall Caine or Florence Barclay, and regretting that the new books are really getting ahead of her. His father, whom he considers a very intelligent man, is reading magazines, and is about as likely to read *The Vicar of Wakefield* as he would be to amuse him-

self with a game of logarithms. And those very parents will say later that they have not seen any result from the study of English in high school. If the average boy, on going home from school, should find any member of his family reading, of deliberate choice, for entertainment, any one of the classics read at school, the boy would be stricken beyond power of expression. As for poetry, the connection of that with any natural order of things is inconceivable. If anyone should quote Shelley or Browning at the dinner-table, he would do it shamefacedly, and the whole family would be embarrassed.

Even the sifted-out number who go from high school to college are still marked by the limitations of their training, or lack of training. If an instructor ventures to ask a class of undergraduates, even upperclassmen, what their unrequired reading is, the thing he learns casts a pall over his teaching for weeks. He finds that the very ones who are now dutifully reading Arnold and Meredith and Keats under his enthusiastic and sympathetic direction, are doing their outside reading from sources quite within their own generation. They ingenuously acknowledge preferences for Harold Bell Wright and Gene Stratton Porter and Myrtle Reed. They are not without literary standards for their choice, however; they find that these writers are "true to life," that you can "almost see" their characters, that their "Nature deseriptions are so beautiful." College training has left the students' early taste undamaged.

The present liberality of theory in education—a conscious and striven-for catholicity—tends to put every kind of learning upon the same level. At least that seems to be the application of this catholicity. If a boy can't learn Greek or chemistry, let him make a horse-shoe; if a girl can't read poetry, let her trim a hat. In either case, the youth is being educated; and is not one result as good as the other, if not better? Democracy through education, is the cry. All learning or training is of the same grade. The Greek or science-trained boy and the hat-trimming girl are one, with the advantage on the side of the girl; the only purpose of education anyway is to show one how to make a living. If a man is making a living he is functioning in the highest possible way. English teachers have to hear from

the practical man, "The trouble with English teaching is that all the material of it is impractical and quite out of touch with modern life. Give them something up to date. Substitute Shaw for Shakespeare and George Ade for Bacon and you will get some result." Well, perhaps you would; the force of gravity does assist results.

We make this sort of democracy a slogan without considering whether there is any possibility in it or not. Calling tatting and Æschylus the same thing does not make them so. Pedagogy joys in talking lightly of impossibilities. And in fact we nearly all leave gaps in our recognition of things. We avoid the word aristocracy, in our speech, and all terms that imply serious admission of class distinctions. And yet we all know, whether we are honest enough to acknowledge it or not, that distinctions are going to exist. We may achieve an ideal social scheme in which there will be no artificial gradations, but there will always be natural ones. We talk of universal education, but we really know that it will never come about. Some will be educated and some — even of those who go through high school and college — will not. There will never be a level. Education is not a levelling but an individualizing process. Children of all grades and classes enter high school; and they emerge, not in the same grades and classes, for some will rise and some will sink in the process, but in quite as many. The shifting is determined in part by the school, but more by factors which lie outside of it. The English teacher, for example, wishes that all who pass through his hands might emerge lovers of good reading, prepared to use all that literature has to offer. In his heart, however, he knows that that will never be. Their attainment was determined largely before they ever came to him, determined by their home and its irresponsibility, by their parentage, by the whole course of creation, which may have made all men free, but by no means gave them all the same literary taste.

We need a new distribution of responsibility, and the school should really assist in it, instead of making the division constantly more unequal. In English, some means of uniform grouping of pupils would be of much assistance and would do

away with the heterogeneity which gives a sort of dazedness to much of the present instruction. What I should like to propose as a natural and practical basis for the gradation of these pupils would be, not their age or head-measurements, nor a record of their previous work in other subjects, but an examination of their parents. Examinations, I know, are falling into disrepute — among lecturers especially, who are fond of coming among us and saying that it is a sign of inefficiency for a teacher to give an examination. But this would be one of those practical examinations, which we are all passing or failing in, consciously or unconsciously, all the time. Even those lecturers do not know, perhaps, that we are really examining them while we listen, and sometimes finding them below the passing mark.

This method would require both parents, when they wish to enter a child in high school, for instance, to give a list of their own reading for the past year, the magazines they subscribed for and especially those they bought at the news-stands, the daily paper the father took regularly, as well as the one he read on the car going home, dictagraph records of the family conversation for an entire week, a catalogue of the family library and an explanation of how it was acquired, a list of amusements, both those the parents took alone and those they shared with the children — and anything else the examining board might think pertinent. With these points in hand there would be little difficulty in forming a prompt estimate of the taste of the pupil, his speech usage, general knowledge, and many other things about him. A board would readily determine what work he needed and was capable of doing. The families of a town could be graded as A, B, C, and so on down to Z; — if that did not furnish low enough grades the Greek alphabet could be added below Z, — and kept on record in that way. As they sent up successive children to be entered in school, it would be necessary for the authorities only to look at the family record and assign the youth to his natural place. If at any time the parents should become ambitious to raise the initial rating of their children, they could apply for a new examination, to show that the character of the home had appreciably improved.

The teacher or principal, on entering a new pupil from a family

already on record, would merely look at his register and say, "Robinson? C. W., on Fortieth Street? Let me see—Your family subscribed last year for such and such magazines. They bought pretty regularly such others. They haven't in five years read a book that was more than six months old—generally the very latest possible. They read all the works of So-and-So—consider him the best writer they know. They attend some moving-picture show twice a week. Ye-es. Well, we'll start you in Class W and see what you can do." The method would be very simple.

It might be a good thing to institute a similar test for patrons of colleges. It would doubtless lower the mortality rate there. In this case there should be added an affadavit, taken under stern oaths, of the parents' purpose in sending their offspring to college, and especially of their hope and expectation regarding the result. The college could reserve the right to reject any applicants, or accept them only on probation.

Of course a pupil should not be held absolutely to this resulting classification; he could have a chance to show that by some exception to law, or some outside opportunity or special effort of the teacher, he had better taste or judgment than his parents. That often happens. The plan would not necessarily lead to caste-making. It might even have a good reflexive effect, in that the pupil might, for the sake of his own credit and standing, take in hand the reading and amusements of his parents and the choice of a family library. A general intellectual advance might come about through it, if parents were once convinced by such a definite and authoritative sign that the home did function in relation to its children.

English is the most obvious and natural field for an initial experiment of this sort, but there are doubtless other departments where it would also be effective. If it were proved to all parents that they were actually affecting their children's intellectual progress it would be worth while. This plan would really be the basis for a new sort of Parent-Teacher Association, a very natural and potential one. There might in time be developed a new activity of the parental conscience, which has by no means been dormant in all its functions. A beautiful emu-

lation might arise between the school and the home, and a parental avarice of duties equal to that of the school at present. The school would still be the dominant element, of course, and there would be no reason why emulation should pass into jealousy. The home has really been a very good thing, considering everything. Some of us, if we had to choose between what we learned at school and what we learned at home, would take the latter accumulation, not for any sentimental reasons but merely on its merits. It would be a pity, on the whole, to do away with the home, as some educators practically propose. Would it not be better to make it an important annex to the public schools, than to discard it entirely?

MARGARET LYNN.

University of Kansas.